

Message Text

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44

ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 444

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

/CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 6446

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LA

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH KING

SUMMARY: THE AMBASSADORS WHO ATTENDED THE ANNUAL CANOE RACES IN LUANG PRABANG ON AUGUST 17TH WERE GRANTED AUDIENCES WITH THE KING. IN THE COURSE OF MY TWENTY MINUTE TALK WITH HIM THE KING DISCUSSED WATERGATE, AMERICAN AID, SOUVANNA'S ILLNESS AND PATHET LAO ATTITUDES. END SUMMARY.

1. AT A BALL FOLLOWING THE ANNUAL PIROGUE RACES AT LUANG PRABANG THE KING TALKED FOR ABOUT TWENTY MINUTES WITH EACH OF THE AMBASSADORS PRESENT. AS THESE AUDIENCES WERE HELD IN A CORNER OF THE BALLROOM IN WHICH A VERY NOISY BAND WAS PLAYING AND GIVEN THE FACT THAT THE KING'S SPEECH IMPEDIMENT MAKES HIM HARD TO UNDERSTAND UNDER THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES, MY COLLEAGUES AND I SHARE SOME DOUBTS REGARDING OUR COMPREHENSION OF WHAT THE ACTUALLY SAID TO EACH OF US. THE FOLLOWING IS WHAT I COULD MAKE OUT.

2. THE KING SAID HE HAD BEEN FOLLOWING POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE U.S. WITH GREAT INTEREST. WATERGATE
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HAD BEEN A MOST EXTRAORDINARY EPISODE AND IT WAS UNFOR-

TUNATE (TRISTE) THAT PRESIDENT NIXON SHOULD HAVE BEEN FORCED TO RESIGN AS A RESULT OF ACTIVITIES WHICH APPEARED TO BE UNNECESSARY. THE KING SAID HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT PRESIDENT FORD WOULD PROVIDE LEADERSHIP TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. HE HAD HAD THE PLEASURE OF KNOWING ALL THE PRESIDENTS OF THE U.S. SINCE PRESIDENT TRUMAN. HE WAS INTERESTED TO SEE WHO WOULD NOW BE PICKED TO BECOME VICE-PRESIDENT. HE WONDERED WHETHER GOVERNOR ROCKEFELLER OR SENATOR GOLDWATER WOULD BE SELECTED.

3. I REPLIED THAT I SENSED GREAT RELIEF AT HOME THAT WATERGATE WAS OVER. I DREW ATTENTION TO THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH TO THE CONGRESS EMPHASIZING THE CONSTANCY OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY AND I OPINED THAT THE PRESIDENT SEEMED TO HAVE MANY PERSONS UNDER CONSIDERATION FOR THE VICE-PRESIDENCY.

4. THE KING SAID THAT IN HIS VIEW THE IMPORTANT THING WAS THE MAINTENANCE OF CORDIAL AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS BETWEEN LAOS AND THE U.S. LAOS WAS GRATEFUL FOR AID RECEIVED BUT FRIENDSHIP OUTWEIGHED ALL OTHER CONSIDERATIONS. AMERICA HAD BEEN THROUGH A CRISIS BUT THE PRESENT CRISIS IN LAOS CAUSED BY THE ILLNESS OF THE PRIME MINISTER WAS FAR MORE DRAMATIC. I EXPRESSED REGRET OVER THE PRIME MINISTER'S HEART ATTACK NOTING THAT HE WAS MAKING AN EXTRAORDINARILY GOOD RECOVERY. THE KING SAID SOMETHING TO THE EFFECT THAT SOUVANNA WAS INDISPENSABLE. I AGREED ADDING THAT HIS ABSENCE MIGHT LEAD TO FURTHER DELAYS IN ACHIEVING NATIONAL RECONCILIATION A WARRYING THING TO ME IN RECENT MONTHS HAD BEEN THE DEPTH OF THE SUSPICION AND MIS-TRUST OF THE U.S. HARBORED BY THE PATHET LAO. AT THIS THE KING BECAME MORE ANIMATED AND SAID THAT THIS WORRIED HIM ALSO. INDEED HE HAD TOLD SEVERAL OF THOSE GENTLEMEN THAT THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE U.S. WAS UNGRACIOUS AND ILL-ADVISED. THEY SHOULD REALIZE THAT THE VERY RICE THEY ATE WAS PROVIDED BY THE AMERICANS AND IT WAS CONTRARY TO LAO TRADITION TO BE ILL-MANNERED AND UNGRATEFUL. I EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THESE REMARKS. THE KING SAID HE HAD ENJOYED OUR TALK AND
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HE WISHED HE HAD MORE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS. WITH THAT THE AUDIENCE ENDED.

5. I SUBSEQUENTLY CHATTED WITH SOUPHANOVONG WHOSE THEME WAS THE NECESSITY OF LAOS BECOMING SELF-SUFFICIENT IN RICE AND PHOUMI WHO EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER ALLEGED PLOTTING BY THE VIENTIANE SIDE BUT WAS SMILING AND

FRIENDLY AS USUAL.
WHTTEHOUSE

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